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## LATIN CLUBS AND THEIR PROGRAMS<sup>1</sup>

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The fact that Latin is so well holding its own in our western high schools, where most of the institutions for which our pupils are preparing do not require Latin for admission, some not even for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, would indicate that to some extent at least the Latin teachers are answering the appeal and the need of the age in which we live.

To give a brief review of some means that are being used to accomplish this end is the purpose of this paper. We all agree *sine controversia* that the personality of the teacher is the really live factor in all teaching. No outside stimuli can ever be a substitute for vigorous, inspiring, live, class instruction. Yet the limitations of the precious lesson period preclude so much that is of intense interest and is closely related to practical life that the earnest, wide-awake teacher must devise some means of bringing this material before the students. To meet this need there have grown up in the last decade voluntary organizations under a variety of names. The organization forms an "inner circle," as indeed it is called in a New Orleans high school, through which this illustrative work may be done and through which, also, it may be transmitted to ever-widening circles.

In East High School, Rochester, the organization represents the Roman Senate, while in Little Rock and Greenville, Ohio, the Roman Republic is used as the model. In the Republic, the officers in a general way are assigned duties which suggest those of consul, praetor, edile, or quaestor, while the society is divided into the different orders of citizens. The plan of organization as described in the *Classical Journal* sounds alluringly simple, but a

<sup>1</sup> Read at the annual meeting in 1914 of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South.

“codex” of thirty typewritten pages, which served as a sort of *Robert’s Rules of Order* for one of these, gives a hint that somebody worked considerably overtime in perfecting its machinery. And yet, if through such an organization students are led really to comprehend the working plan of these institutions, is it not worth all it costs?

In most societies, however, the plan of organization is similar to that of a literary or debating club, and the chief work of the society is done through its periodical, usually bi-weekly, programs. In fact one of the chief advantages of organization is that we are held to a definite time for doing this outside work. What may be done at any time is very often not done at all—even by an enthusiastic Latin teacher.

These programs are limited in scope and variety only by the taste and the time of the teacher in charge. The society must depend upon the teacher, not only for inspiration and wise guidance, but for definite direction as well. The background of the immature student is so meager and the time he can give to this work so limited that without this help he can accomplish nothing worth while.

In our own society, the society with which I happen to be most familiar, those programs have proved most popular which have followed some line of comparison of Roman life with our own; as festivals, amusements, professions, buildings, or home life. As a number of typical programs given by different societies have appeared from time to time in the *Classical Journal*, I shall not give any in detail here. The number of topics that are really worth while and at the same time appeal to the interest of our students is much greater than many of us may think. We sometimes forget that much that is trite and commonplace to us is fresh and stimulating to them. Modern juvenile fiction and up-to-date “movies” are not overstocked with classical features and the background they furnish is not distinctively Roman.

But the material in lighter vein, which must form a part of every program if we expect to attract students for an extra hour after the more or less strenuous lessons are over, is not so easy to find. True, we can always have music. If our Latin songs grow

stale and do not prove sufficiently lively, we can have songs that are not Latin, and different forms of instrumental music, which fit all times and all programs. Recitations, too, need not be confined to classical lines, although there is a considerable variety of these when one knows where to find them. It is to be regretted that we have not more short dialogues of the quality of Miss Olive Sutherland's "School Boy's Dream." We published a "Satura Romana" for some time as our amusement feature, but the supply of Latin humor available for high-school people is pitifully small. Latin squibs and jokes soon run short. It is too severe a tax on the time of a teacher not gifted with the wit of a Shorey or a Showerman to keep going, for a great while, a Latin "funny" paper, even with the valiant assistance of the *editor* who is to read it.

The posters which announce these programs, placed in a conspicuous position in a public corridor, serve as a continual advertisement of the society. The more striking the poster and the more attractive the program, the better the standing it gives the Latin department in the school.

The great event in the Latin club, however, is the annual public entertainment. It would indeed be interesting if we could have this afternoon a panorama of the different forms of entertainment presented by our high schools in the past few years. Here we have an original dramatization of some well-known scenes in Cicero and Virgil by the East High School, Rochester. Here, a more elaborate presentation of Dr. Miller's ever popular and fascinating *Dido, the Phoenician Queen*. Now a triclinium is fitted up in truly regal splendor, and an elaborate Roman cena is served. Pages crown the reclining guests with chaplets of leaves and a bard discourses sweet music to the accompaniment of the tuneful lyre. You may choose whether you will be a mere spectator at North High School, Columbus, Ohio, or a guest at Lewis Institute or Bradley Polytechnic.

Now we have a simple program presented by a small high school of twenty-five pupils in a town in Wyoming only four years old, with the significant name of "Sparks," contrasted with a gorgeous pageant with more than a hundred characters representing *The Siege of Troy*, staged by the Bowen High School, Chicago.

The high schools have even had the temerity to enter what has been considered exclusively college domains, and several have given Greek plays and one a Roman comedy. For an account of many other interesting and original entertainments I must again refer you to the Latin teacher's *vade mecum*, the *Classical Journal*. From its pages it would seem that the most popular form of entertainment of the past year has been Miss Paxson's *Latin Plays*. While all of those mentioned have a distinct value in creating a classical atmosphere, and interesting pupils about Latin, these have a unique value besides, in that they interest pupils in Latin itself. In hearing these plays, many pupils for the first time realize that Latin was once used, not only by orators and historians, but by boys in their games and in their lessons; that it was the language of the home; that even a proposal of marriage might be made and accepted in Latin. Written in very simple language as they are, easy to present in scenery and costume, and at the same time attractive and highly entertaining to pupils of every age, it is not surprising that they have met with a reception so cordial. The fact that almost four hundred separate orders have been sent out by the publishers from the Chicago office alone, which supplies twenty states, indicates a demand highly complimentary to their author, and furnishes another proof of the avidity with which Latin teachers grasp every available means of stimulating an interest in their subject.

But aside from the regular programs and the public entertainment, there are many lines of illustrative work being carried on more or less systematically. The stereopticon has long been a favorite means of visualization, and since we have the inexpensive radiopticon, with which we can use postcards, the scope of the picture-show is much enlarged. Cuts and postcards illustrating almost every phase of our work may be obtained at little cost, and may be effectively used for special exhibits or in connection with daily class work.

A very convenient means of displaying illustrative work and one that yields the highest returns for the time expended is the bulletin board. This is simply a board hung in the classroom in a position to catch the eye of the pupil when entering the room.

The material displayed may be a picture appropriate to the day's lesson, or a clipping from a daily paper, in some way connected with Latin, a cartoon, a joke, or an advertisement. The pupils themselves will furnish most of the material. Clippings recently contributed by pupils include the following items of interest: Our modern "Swat the Fly" dates back to Diocletian; football can be traced to the ancient Greeks; a handsome youth born on a small Nebraska farm has been posing before sculptors in Athens as a model for Apollo. Illustrations of this youth as Apollo and Narcissus gave this article additional charm; a colored picture of Dido on the funeral pyre, clipped from a magazine; "Vox populi, vox dei, Hoax" formed the headline of an article reporting a speech made by one of our prominent lawyers. "I understand all but the ho-ax" was the not unnatural comment of the youth who presented it. A new advertisement by an automobile company, "Vidi, Veni, Vici," was another contribution. Dr. Wylie's recent statement that his infant of less than two years can speak Latin just as well as English, called forth comments not complimentary to the Doctor's veracity until the point in the joke was recognized.

Another form of bulletin named the "Acta Diurna" has been successfully used by a Seattle high school. On this are printed in large type, in Latin, school news and topics of special interest.

*Sibylline Leaves*, a booklet published at least twice by Central High School, Kansas City, is an excellent presentation of pupils' work, translations, drawings, and sketches especially connected with the texts read. *Latine*, which ran for two or three years in Oak Park (Ill.) High School, was perhaps the most ambitious and successful wholly Latin publication that has been attempted. In several cities a page in the school paper is devoted to classical interests. This is a valuable acquisition wherever it can be secured and would form an excellent medium of exchange for our Latin clubs, but unfortunately many of our papers "cannot afford" to give the space.

Only a few high schools have the advantage of proximity to such collections as the Saalburg at Washington University, St. Louis, or the excellent museums of Chicago, Boston, or New York, but there are few communities that cannot furnish material for a

loan exhibit from among the teachers and outside friends who have been abroad. A Roman lamp, a Grecian vase, a coin from the time of Caesar, or a bit of marble from the Acropolis may prove a wonderful stimulus to the imagination.

Illustrative work made by the pupils themselves is especially helpful. Almost every article of dress, weapons of defense and offense, scroll, tablet, and even models of the Roman house and warship, may be made by pupils. Thanks to the accurate specifications of the architect, Caesar's bridge has been built in miniature many, many times. A Caesar class in the Peru (Neb.) Normal, with the help of their teacher, built a real bridge over a ravine in the campus. This bridge is serving pedestrians today.

*Latin Games*, published in Appleton, Wisconsin, has proved in the opinion of those teachers who have used it a very entertaining and efficacious means of fixing verb forms. Most of us, no doubt, have tested the game spirit in contests in the form of "spell-downs," on vocabulary or forms. Those held between the champions of different classes have proved an excellent incentive to good vocabulary work.

Two years ago at the meeting of the Classical Association in Cincinnati, Miss Frances E. Sabin, of Oak Park (Ill.) High School, presented to the public for the first time her marvelous collection of charts. It would be difficult to express in terms too extravagant either the value of her contribution to the Latin world or the grateful appreciation that has been accorded it throughout the country. The plan and the purpose of this exhibit are too well known to all of you, I am sure, to need any explanation. The patience, ingenuity, and infinite labor expended by Miss Sabin and her teachers in its preparation excite our admiration more and more. Before the charts and accompanying manual were ready for use several ambitious teachers prepared exhibits along the lines suggested.

Those prepared, with many original features, by Miss Virginia Claybaugh, of Shortridge High School, Indianapolis, and Miss Julia Padmore, of Fort Dodge, Iowa, are very complete and have attracted wide attention. More than four hundred schools are now using the charts. Two have already made very large exhibits:

the Peabody High School, Pittsburgh, and the Girls' High School, of Philadelphia. Of the latter collection, which numbers 120 charts, Miss Allen, the head of the Classical Department, says: "The making of such an exhibit is so tremendously worth while, that I believe that all Latin teachers who may be impelled to undertake it, no matter how small the department or how strenuous the day's work, will feel more than repaid for any expenditure of time and energy."

These large collections are in almost continuous demand as loan exhibits in neighboring schools. Important as is the immediate effect upon a school of seeing such an exhibit, the training received by pupils in collecting the material and making the charts is of more lasting value. The result of this training is especially noticeable in an increased readiness to connect their Latin words with the English derivatives. In this "vocabulary" period into which we have lately emerged from the "syntactical," this assistance is particularly welcome.

An excellent feature of Miss Sabin's idea is the readiness with which it may be adapted to the work already organized in our schools. We made our first public exhibition recently as our contribution to a joint program of literary clubs. Under the caption, "How Latin Lives Today," eighteen charts were presented by two pupils in short, pointed speeches. Those were selected which made the most striking appeal to the eye. The novelty of the presentation won, as it does everywhere, the most rapt attention. Much of the material on the charts had been worked out in connection with two Latin society programs on the subjects, "How Latin Helps Our English" and "Things in the Roman World That Interest Us Today."

A recent program on "The Influence of Rome and Greece as Seen in Omaha Public Buildings" furnished material that will later take permanent form. One chart will be devoted to our magnificent county courthouse, just completed, in whose architecture and decorations Roman ideas and emblems are a conspicuous feature. Our program-poster, composed of postcards of prominent buildings, forms one of the most beautiful charts of our collection.



In connection with this paper I have begged the privilege of making the initial announcement of the publication in the near future of a handbook by Miss Paxson for the use of Latin clubs. This has been prepared in answer to the inquiries of numerous correspondents. It aims to supply the material for which teachers are seeking. It is hoped that this will solve the problem of "time" which has prevented many an ambitious teacher from undertaking this work.

More than ever in the preparation of this paper have I been impressed with the debt the high-school Latin teacher owes the *Classical Journal*. To express adequately an appreciation of its help as a source of inspiration and practical suggestion would require another paper.

I cannot close without one word in reference to what is, after all, the richest return from all this supplementary work, the humanizing of the teacher. In preparatory work there is necessarily much of drill and routine. The field is restricted and there is danger of losing our sense of proportion. The more intense and devoted the teacher, the more need of a wide horizon and a clear vision of the ultimate goal—the preparation for life.